



Testimony in support of Governor's Bill 842

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Connecticut Audubon Society, a member of Connecticut's Clean Water Investment Coalition, supports Governor's Bill 842, which would provide \$997 million through the Clean Water Fund over the next two years for clean water infrastructure.

Our mission is to conserve the state's environment through science-based education and advocacy focused on the state's bird populations and habitats. While much of the support for the Clean Water Fund focuses, appropriately, on the jobs it creates, we wish to discuss how the Clean Water Fund benefits conservation.

The obvious prerequisite for functioning aquatic, estuarine and marine ecosystems is clean water.

Up-to-date, well-maintained wastewater treatment plants and sewer systems in Hartford and Middletown, for example, help keep the Connecticut River clean, allowing the river to support a large and diverse population of fish. Those fish become food for the scores of Bald Eagles that winter on the river. Those fish are also food for the eagles that stay here for the summer to nest and raise young – Connecticut now has 25 pairs of nesting Bald Eagles.

Up-to-date, well-maintained wastewater treatment plants and sewer systems in Norwalk, for example, keep the water clean for the expansive oyster beds around the Norwalk Islands, providing shellfish not just for the oyster industry but for the American Oystercatchers that nest on our beaches.

Rivers, estuaries such as the mouth of the Housatonic and its adjacent 1,500 acres of salt marsh, and Long Island Sound itself are among our richest habitats. In summer our shores are graced with Least Terns and Piping Plovers (both threatened in Connecticut), Great

Egrets and Snowy Egrets, cormorants and gulls, and many other species that need clean water as much as they need clear air.

The nitrogen removal, phosphorus removal and pathogen disinfection that our sewage plants provide are essential to keeping our waterways clean and rich in oxygen. Operating and maintaining sewage infrastructure is a local function but it is a shared responsibility.

Connecticut deserves credit for embracing that responsibility by providing money through the Clean Water Fund. The Fund creates jobs, it leads to better recreational opportunities for state residents, and it restores and improves some of our most important wildlife habitats.

Connecticut Audubon Society operates nature centers in Fairfield, Milford, Glastonbury and Pomfret, an EcoTravel office in Essex and an advocacy program in Hartford. We manage 19 wildlife sanctuaries, and have preserved over 2,600 acres of open space. Our education program reaches more than 200,000 children and adults annually.

We strongly believe that a fully-funded Clean Water Fund is essential to helping conserve Connecticut's birds and their habitats.